

# Art in America



Brice Dellsperger: *Body Double 18*, 2003, video; at Team.

films. His laborious remakes are usually amusing, but always have the possibility of revitalizing the original film with a fresh interpretation. In the best of his work, Dellsperger both entertains and leaves a strong enough impression to help us see the source material in a new light.

—Catherine LaSota

## Brice Dellsperger at Team

Since 1995, Paris-based Brice Dellsperger (b. 1972) has been creating video remakes of movies that he refers to as the “Body Double” series. In each installment of the now 20-part series, Dellsperger chooses a brief segment from an existing movie—anywhere from 30 seconds to 17 minutes long—and recasts the scene, leaving background environments and the soundtrack unaltered.

The centerpiece of this show was *Body Double 18* (2003), presented in the U.S. for the first time. A three-channel projection that covered one entire wall of the gallery, *Body Double 18* is a remake of a scene from the David Lynch cult classic *Mulholland Drive* (2001). In the projection, 15 different actors, both male and female, take their turns in the role of a character (originally played by Naomi Watts) sobbing and furiously masturbating on a couch right after her lover has abandoned her. In Dellsperger’s version, every actor, regardless of gender, is heavily made up to resemble a garish drag queen, complete with brightly colored wig and painted eyebrows. The viewer hears the sobs of Naomi Watts, but sees the acting of Dellsperger’s unorthodox “body doubles,” who mimic nearly exactly all of Watts’s facial expressions and movements. My initial reaction was

amusement at the use of body types that differ so greatly from the original actor’s appearance. After watching the scene a second or third time, however, I came to appreciate how much an actor’s physical characteristics affect perception of a scene. We are used to drag queens being portrayed as theatrical, outgoing personalities, but Dellsperger has cast them in an unexpected moment of humbling vulnerability, and that surprise is the most interesting aspect of this piece.

Also on view in side rooms were *Body Double 16* (2003, after Stanley Kubrick’s *A Clockwork Orange* and Ken Russell’s *Women in Love*) and *Body Double 20* (2004, after Mike Hodges’s *Flash Gordon*). Of the two, *Body Double 16* is most notable. It represents another of Dellsperger’s explorations in this series: recasting all the characters from one film with the same person. Here, Dellsperger has the performance artist Jean-Luc Verna play every role, editing each character into the context of the original film via digital technology. At times, up to three versions of Verna (a distinctive-looking actor with multiple facial piercings and body tattoos) appear on the screen, conversing, arguing and fighting, giving the impression that the actor is in conflict with his own inner demons.

One could describe Dellsperger’s “Body Double” series as a loving homage to some of the artist’s favorite